

Mary Williams

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Monroe, North Carolina

A
HISTORY



Centennial

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**A HISTORY
OF THE
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**



Monroe, North Carolina

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FOREWORD

In anticipation of the celebration on September 26, 1973, of the one hundredth birthday of the First Presbyterian Church, the Session on March 14, 1971, appointed a steering committee to formulate plans for the centennial. The committee felt that one of the features of the celebration should be a history of the church, so that present and future members might have a memento of the centennial and a record of this part of their Christian heritage.

Mr. G. Dick Pierce was the first chairman of the committee, but a press of duties forced him to withdraw from this position, and Mr. Dan S. Davis was then named chairman. Other members of the committee are Mrs. Brock Smith, Mr. John R. Milliken, Mr. William J. Brewer, Sr. and Mrs. James T. Griffith.

The material was compiled by Mrs. Griffith and prepared for printing by Mrs. Charles Fortenberry. Mr. Brewer designed the attractive cover, which has been used on the church bulletins this year. This cover faithfully reproduces the three sanctuaries that have housed the congregations throughout the century.

Although this history is factual in its presentation, the spirit of the some three thousand people whose lives are woven into it is its essence. Thanks to the planning and foresight of the founders of the church, the loyalty and dedication of its members, the leadership of its pastors and laymen and the sustaining grace of God, it has grown from a membership of sixteen in 1873 to that of 539 at the beginning of 1973. "Truly, the Lord has done great things for us."

Respectfully submitted,
The committee

SOURCES USED

Minutes of Session Meeting, 1893 - 1973

Church History by Mr. Walter A. Henderson, 1936

History of Woman's Auxiliary by Miss Mary Blair, 1932

Article from the Monroe Journal, September 3, 1901

Article from the Monroe Enquirer, September 5, 1901

Articles from the Monroe Enquirer - Journal, March 29, 1968 and May 14, 1969

Records in the office of the Register of Deeds

September 26, 1973

JONES

PASTORS

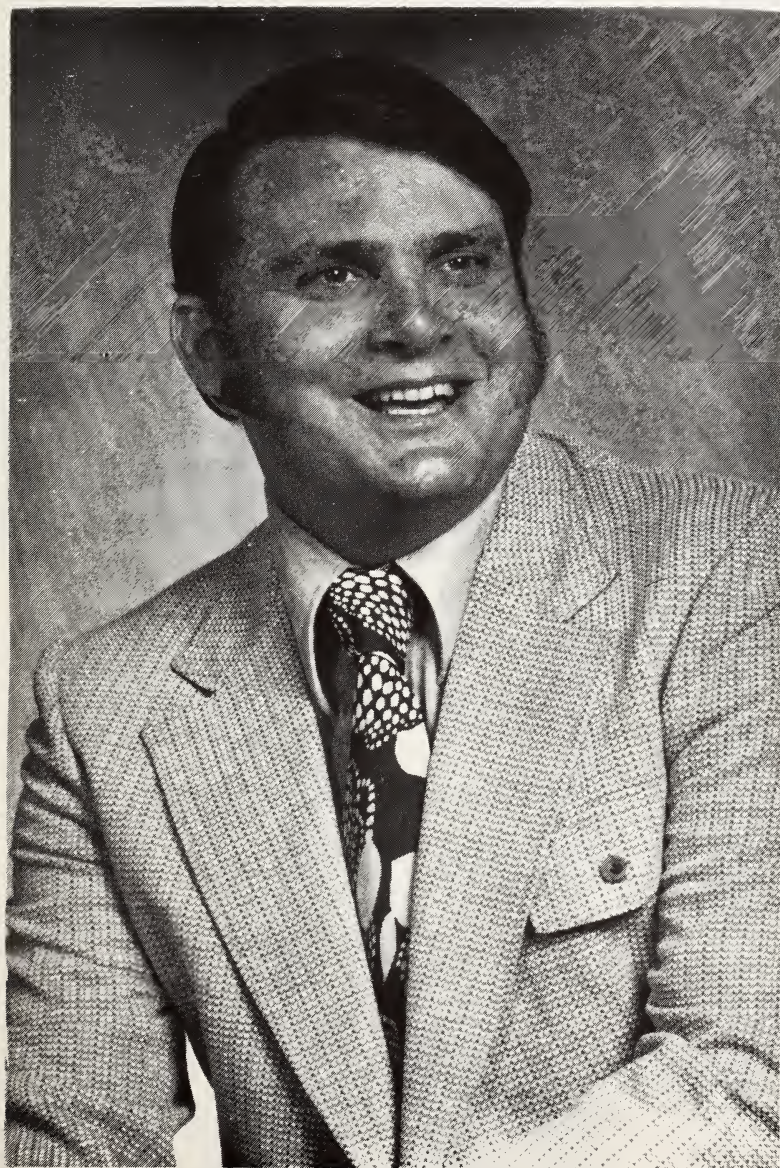
We have been signally fortunate through the years in our pastoral leadership. It would be impossible to write an adequate profile of these men of God, because the lack of information and of space prohibits it. Each in his dedication to the Church of Christ and to the advancement of His kingdom has played a vital role in the rich history of the First Presbyterian Church. All will be named subsequently in the unfolding of the history and placed in time according to their tenure as pastor.

All but the last four of the following men are deceased:

The Reverend:

S.C. Alexander	September 26,	1873 -	1877
R.A. Miller		1877 -	1884
P.R. Law		1884 -	1888
C.W. Robinson		1888 June	1890
H.M. Dixon	May	1891 - October 16,	1902
George H. Atkinson	April 9,	1903 -	1909
George F. Robertson	Supply	1909 -	1910
R.F. Kirkpatrick		1910 -	1912
Dr. H.E. Gurney		1912 -	1923
W.B.S. Chandler		1923 - April 1,	1932
D.P. McGeachy, Jr.	October	1932 - March	1942
Robert Turner	August	1942 - January 1,	1945
Dr. Roy F. Whitley *	June 1,	1945 - August 31,	1968
Joe E. Stowe	July 1,	1969 - February 1,	1973
W.M. Edwards, II	May 15	1973 -	

* Dr. Whitley was named Pastor Emeritus by the Session on June 30, 1968.



THE PASTOR

The Reverend William Masters Edwards, II

FORMER PASTORS



Rev. Robert Turner



Dr. Roy F. Whitley



Rev. Joe E. Stowe

EARLY EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A CHURCH

The early history of Presbyterianism in Monroe is incomplete, as no records of the mid-1800's are in existence. It is known, however, that at some time between 1850 and 1855, a Presbyterian Church was organized here with twelve members and that Messrs. D. F. Hardin, Aaron Stegall, F. C. Williams and a Mr. Alexander were elected as elders. This church did not long survive, and for some twenty years there was no Presbyterian Church in Monroe and only one small one in the county. The reason for the failure of this fledgling church is a matter of conjecture, but it was probably a victim of the times. During this period, many of the men and older boys were serving in the Confederate Army in the War Between the States. Following the war, there were the harassing days of Reconstruction; and during these dark days, it seemed that the opportunity for the establishment of a Presbyterian Church in Monroe had passed. Happily, this was not the case.

THE FIRST CHURCH

By 1870, Monroe had grown, new railways were being built and Presbyterians were coming into the town seeking businesses, homes and a church; this brightened the prospects for the organization of a church here. Toward this end, Dr. Daniel A. Penick of Rocky River Presbyterian Church of Concord Presbytery, the Reverend W.M. McDonald of Philadelphia Church and the Reverend R.Z. Johnson of Providence Presbyterian Church preached occasionally in Monroe from 1870 to 1873. Where these services were held is a supposition; perhaps in homes or in one of the two Presbyterian Churches in the county, Tirzah or Union.

Early in 1873, Mecklenburg Presbytery appointed the Reverend S. C. Alexander, an evangelist, to preach in Monroe and to organize a church if the time seemed propitious. Thus, on September 26, 1873, the organization of the First Presbyterian Church was effected. There were sixteen charter members; as follows: W.H. Fitzgerald, Samuel H. Walkup, G.W. Flowe, Isabella Austin, James F. Austin, Mrs. J.F. Hilton, W.H. Simpson, Jasper Swann, William H. Trott, Enoch Yandle, Mrs. Cynthia McLelland, Mrs. Lucinda Simpson and Mrs. Jane Trott. The church roll names only these thirteen as being charter members, but an earlier historian included the names of John R. Simpson and Sarah N. Simpson. Mr. Alexander was called as pastor for one-fourth of his time, which presumably means that he preached here once a month.

Today, ours is the oldest Presbyterian Church organized by Mecklenburg Presbytery; not the first, but the oldest, as the first church so organized is no longer in existence. It was established as a mission church and remained so until around 1901.

To secure a house of worship, this first congregation bought from the Methodist Episcopal Church a small frame church of one room, located at the present site at the corner of Windsor and Church Streets. The lot was large enough that a manse could be built upon it in the future. The

purchase price of \$1300 was underwritten by five men: two Elders, Colonel W.H. Fitzgerald and Colonel Samuel H. Walkup; and laymen, W.H. Simpson, G.W. Flowe and W.H. Trott. These men gave their personal notes for this sum and upon redeeming them on January 1, 1874, had the property converted to themselves. A year later, on January 30, 1875, Presbytery assisted with a gift of eight hundred dollars and the title was transferred to the trustees of the church.

Since the building was inadequate for church purposes, several hundred dollars had to be spent for work inside and out and new benches and pulpit furniture had to be purchased. Unfortunately, we were unable to find a picture of the church building, but Mr. William Brewer located a drawing of the structure at the Central United Methodist Church. His accurate copy of the drawing is seen on the cover of this booklet.

Mr. Alexander served as pastor until 1877; and by this time, the membership had increased to thirty-six. This first pastor not only organized the church, but he also worked along with the membership in the renovation of the building and in starting the church on a firm foundation.

Other pastors who served in this first church are as follows: the Reverend R.A. Miller, P.R. Law, C.W. Robinson and H.M. Dixon.

Since the first Sessional records extant are dated August 31, 1893, we are missing further data for the twenty year period from 1873 to 1893. However, it is interesting to note that by 1896 the total budget for this small church was \$1,725.87.

THE SECOND CHURCH BUILDING

By 1900, the little frame sanctuary was no longer adequate to house the congregation, so plans were made to build a new structure on the same site. The first active steps looking to the construction of a new building were taken on April 7, 1900, when the decision was formally made by the congregation to launch a building program. The first building was not torn down but was sold to Mr. Vernon Lockhart, who moved it to his home site and used it for a barn. Some of the members of the Centennial Committee searched for the building, hoping to get a picture of it, but it is no longer standing. However, the corner stone was preserved and is in the possession of the church.

The plan adopted for financing the new building was that of voluntary contributions, and it worked! The following men were named to the Building Committee: R.A. Morrow, chairman; Dr. J. M. Belk, S.O. Blair, C.H. Polly, S.B. Hart, W.A. Lane and G.W. Van Pelt. The architectural firm employed to design the building was Wheeler, McMichael and Company from Charlotte. Builders for the brick and stone work were Ingram and Green, and the wood work was done by Hollman and Tyndall.

With a membership of only ninety-six at this time, the erection of a church building at the cost of \$14,000 was quite an undertaking. But according to Mr. Dixon, the pastor, it was accomplished because "All the

members worked in harmony, looking to the same end and laboring with a spirit of brotherly love."

Facing the intersection of Windsor and Church Streets, it was an imposing structure of Washington red pressed brick trimmed with Georgia granite. The interior wood was of North Carolina mountain white pine, finished in oil. All the furniture except the new pump organ was of oak. Striking features of the interior were the beautiful opalescent leaded glass windows and the magnificent crystal chandeliers, the latter a gift from Mrs. Ellen Fitzgerald. So new as to be noted in the newspapers in our town was the use of electricity in lighting the church. Adjoining the main auditorium was an annex with a folding partition. Together, the two had a seating capacity of 500.

The first service in the new church was held on Sunday evening, September 1, 1901. All the other churches in town were invited, and there was a capacity crowd. The service was led by Dr. A.M. Croxton, the Reverend W.M. Bagley and the pastor, the Reverend H.M. Dixon. The music by the choir was especially noteworthy.

By this time, the church had become self-sustaining and had ceased to be a mission church. By 1906, the debt on the building had been liquidated and the church was dedicated to the glory of God on April 8th of that year. Dr. Samuel M. Smith of Columbia, South Carolina, preached the dedication sermon; and the pastor, the Reverend George H. Atkinson, assisted in the program. A copy of this service was preserved and a few Xerox copies were made recently. Anyone interested can get a copy.

Due to the energy and enthusiasm of the Reverend R.F. Kirkpatrick, who was pastor at the time, a pipe organ was installed in the choir loft around 1910. It remained in use through the last service in this sanctuary, 1968, before the building was razed. It was replaced in the new church building with an Allen electric organ.

Other ministers besides Mr. Dixon, Mr. Atkinson and Mr. Kirkpatrick who occupied the pulpit in this church as pastor were the Reverend George F. Robinson, Dr. H.E. Gurney, the Reverend W.B.S. Chandler, the Reverend D.P. McGeachy, Jr., the Reverend Robert Turner and Dr. Roy F. Whitley.

In 1968, plans were in the making for the erection of a new church building. Before this second edifice was torn down in that year, disposition of the furnishings was made at the suggestion and with the assistance of a committee headed by Mrs. J.W. Ormand. The cross and candlesticks, which were memorial gifts to the church, were preserved for use in the new church. Before the windows were sold, Mrs. Ormand removed and saved the garnet disks in each, since they were backed by clear glass. These beautiful and symbolic circles have been recently mounted on a screen, which will be on display in September and used in an appropriated place in the building later. Mrs. Ormand designed the screen, Dr. Ormand supplied the materials and Mr. Pat N. Parker made it. Mr. Parker's craftsmanship will be apparent to all who view the screen. It was decorated by Mrs. Dallas Daily, whose artistry is

displayed in beautiful design and color. She has made of the screen a handsome setting for the treasured disks. Mrs. Ormand also removed and stored the prisms from the large chandelier. She stored them systematically so that they can be replaced according to the diagram she made, if and when and where this beautiful fixture can be used again.

THE PRESENT EDIFICE

Before the second building was torn down in 1968, the plans for a new building were already finalized. In preparation for this building program, an expansion fund had been setup in 1945, during the pastorate of Dr. Whitley. The funds had increased with the years but not in a sufficient amount for the erection of a new church. However, they did provide the means for the acquisition of additional property in the church block. On July 28, 1963, the congregation voted to buy the C.H. Sievers property on Windsor Street for \$16,000; also, three lots on Tallyrand Avenue from the Olin B. Sikes heirs for \$2,000 each; and the Albert Evans lot on Tallyrand for \$2,000. Again, on December 15, 1963, the congregation approved the purchase of a lot bordering 102 feet on Church Street and 480 feet on Tallyrand Avenue for \$8,000; this is the present site of the manse. Authorization for the purchase of the Sewell property adjacent to the Sunday School Building on Church Street for \$25,000 was given by the congregation on March 27, 1966. With the acquisition of these properties, paid for from the expansion fund, the church owns an area large enough to support future expansion of its plant.

With this much accomplished, it was time to get to the business of erecting a new church building. Toward this end, the Session on February 12, 1967, appointed a planning council, and this council later became the Building Committee. Voting members of this committee were W.D. Benton, chairman; W.E. Damon, Dan S. Davis, M.B. Honeycutt, B.F. Langley, Mrs. Fred McCallum, R. Hall McGuirt, Charles Norwood, Mrs. J.W. Ormand, R.A. Willis, Jr., Aiken Wolfe; and the trustees: W.H. Morrison, Sr., R.A. Morrow, Sr., B.F. Langley, John R. Milliken, Dr. J.W. Ormand, R.A. Willis, Jr. and W.T. Wall, Jr.

It was decided that the best way to finance the building of the new church would be to employ experts in the field of fund raising, and the addition to the pledges obtained from the membership, a drive to sell \$225,000 worth of bonds was launched on April 3, 1968. The committee in charge of this was composed of Fred McCallum, Bill Preslar, Andy Boggs and Mrs. T. Lane Ormand.

On March 31, 1968, the last service in the church that had served as a house of worship since 1901 was held. Thereafter, the building was razed and work on the new building was begun in April. The architectural firm of Charles Morrison Grier and Associates of Charlotte drew the plans and the church was built by the Barger Construction Company of Mooresville, N.C., at a cost of \$298,700.

Facing Church Street, this beautiful sanctuary is striking in its departure from the traditional architectural style. The exterior is of

brick, and the auditorium is a combination of brick and wood. The inspirational highlights of the structure are the towering stained glass walls extending across the front and down both sides. They depict in glowing colors major events from both the Old and the New Testaments. The Enquirer-Journal of May 14, 1969, described them as "a panorama of Christendom". The six great arches of laminated wood projecting from the floor on the outer aisles to the ceiling give the sanctuary the spacious atmosphere of a vaulted cathedral. The focal point of the interior is the large wooden cross on the back wall of the choir loft; the cross is the eternal symbol of God's love and His saving grace through Christ. Carpeted in dull gold and lighted with cathedral lanterns and the glow from the windows, the sanctuary invites worship.

Some of the furnishings, both in the sanctuary and in other parts of the church were memorial gifts. A list of these gifts and the names of the donors are recorded in the Memorial Book, which was compiled by Mrs. J.W. Ormand and Mrs. R.A. Willis, Jr.

In addition to the auditorium with a seating capacity of 480, the building contains a foyer, a pastor's study, two offices, a large lounge with kitchenette, a Session Room, a Choir Room and three classrooms.

On June 22, 1969, the first service, a service of consecration, was held in the new church, The Reverend Robert Turner was the speaker, and his sermon topic was "What Mean Ye by These Stones?". The presentation of keys was made by Mr. William D. Benton, and Dr. Roy F. Whitley offered the prayer of consecration.

The Reverend Joe E. Stowe was the first pastor to occupy the pulpit in this new building. Early in his ministry, on July 13, 1969, the Session adopted his plan for the organization of committees to enlist and direct the membership in broader fields of worship and service. These committees and the first chairman of each are as follows: Worship, W.T. Wall, Jr; Commitment, Harvey Morrison, Jr.; Witness and Service, Frank Funderburk; and Strengthening the Church, D.B. Gettys. The following are the present chairmen: Worship, Charles L. Norwood; Commitment, Kenneth Collins; Witness and Service, William J. Brewer, Sr.; Strengthening the Church, Gene Stacy. The chairman of the Property Committee is William C. Hunley, and Dr. William H. McLeod is chairman of the Personnel Committee.

During Mr. Stowe's pastorate, the church employed the Reverend Morris J. Ehrlich as associate pastor from October 1, 1969, to May 13, 1970. Upon his leaving, Mr. Benny E. Gurley served his internship here from June 1, 1970, to the last of August, 1972.

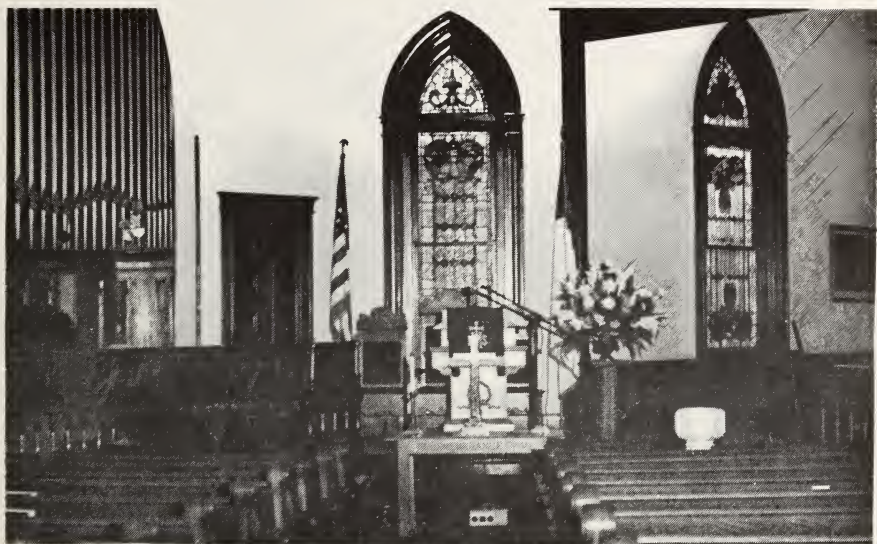
Our present pastor is the Reverend W.M. Edwards, II, who came to us on May 15, 1973. At the time of this writing, he has been here only a short time but the promise of his ministry is great.



Second Building



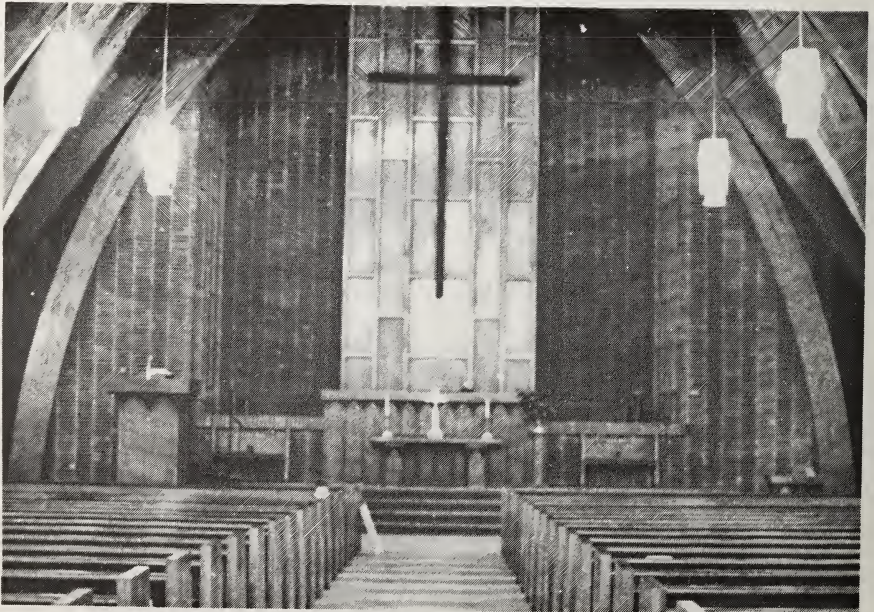
Sunday School Building



Interior Second Building

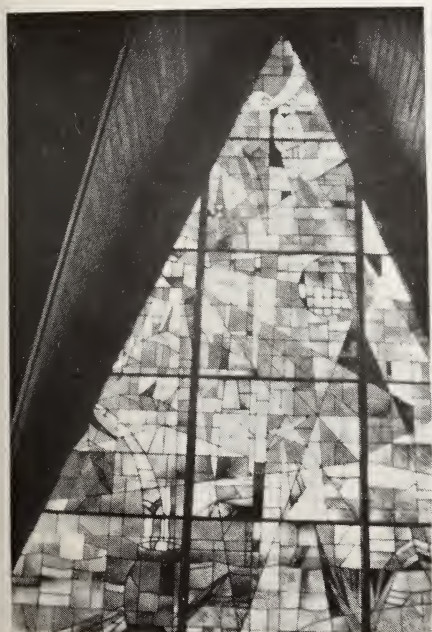


The Present Church





Front



South Side, Old Testament



North Side, New Testament

Walls, Present Church

THE MANSE

There have been two houses used as a manse in the history of the church. The first one was built around 1885, during the pastorate of the Reverend P.R. Law. It was an unpretentious frame house of one story, located on Windsor Street adjacent to the church. It served as a pastoral residence until 1939, when it was destroyed by fire; Mr. McGeachy was pastor of the church at that time. This historian could not locate a picture of the house, but there are many in the congregation who remember it and the pleasant associations they had with the families who occupied it.

The second and present manse was erected on the same site after the fire. This two-story brick house of Georgian architecture was moved to its present location at 201 South Church Street in 1967 to make way for the building of the new church. The house was painted, the heating system was renovated, air conditioning was installed and a car port and patio were added. This manse is pictured below.



THE CHURCH SCHOOL

The Church School has always been an integral part of the church and is under the supervision and control of the Session. Its importance cannot be overemphasized, as it is through the influence and teaching of its leaders that countless people have been led to accept Christ as Lord and Savior and have been helped to develop for themselves a design for living.

Our school, which was first called Sabbath School, is older than the church. Prior to the organization of the church, Mrs. Sarah Walkup Belk Simpson, mother of Dr. J. M. and Mr. W. H. Belk, started a Presbyterian Sabbath School in Monroe. This was at some time between 1870 and 1873 when Dr. Daniel A. Penick was preaching occasionally in Monroe. He assisted Mrs. Simpson with the organization. There is no known record as to where the school met, but it was probably in homes.

Not until 1873 was the school housed in a church building, our first one purchased from the Methodist Church. Although the building was small, there was a division of the membership into classes, which met in different sections of the church. One of our members, Mrs. C.M. Redfern, attended this school as a child. Mrs. Claire says that Sabbath School met at 3:30 on Sunday afternoons. She laughingly told about her teacher, Miss Anna Blair, who would send her students home if they didn't know their catechism assignment, which was what they studied.

There is no record extant as to who the superintendents of the Sabbath School were before 1896, but the Sessional record shows that Dr. J.M. Belk was superintendent at that time. Others known to have served in this capacity since his retirement were as follows: W.A. Henderson, C.W. Walton, Ralph Weber, J.T. Griffith, Sr., R.A. Willis, Jr., W.R. Kirkman, D.B. Gettys, Clegg M. Furr, William R. Edwards and the present one, Baxter Price.

By 1925, the congregation had recognized the necessity for building an edifice to house the Sunday School, as the Sabbath School had come to be called. Early in that year, the Session appointed a building committee whose job it was to secure pledges from the congregation for the erection of a Sunday School Building. The committee was composed of W.A. Henderson, James T. Griffith, Sr., G.B. McClellan, Archie Levy and W.C. Correll. On the third day of March of that year, the Session empowered the trustees of the church to borrow the money needed until the pledges were collected. The building was completed in 1931, during the pastorate of Mr. Chandler, and the debt was retired in 1935, when Mr. McGeachey was pastor. Although this building is no longer adequate, it still houses many of the classes, though some meet in the church and in the Sewell House. The Sunday School was departmentalized by 1906, although there were no Sunday School rooms until the Sunday School Building was occupied.

In 1969, the Sunday School came to be known as the Church School, and it was reorganized into four divisions. These divisions and the names of their first chairmen are as follows: Pre-school, Mrs. Joe E. Stowe; Elementary, Mrs. James H. Williams; Youth, Mrs. Ronald Griffin; and

Adult, Mrs. G. Dick Pierce. The division chairmen at present are: Pre-school, Margaret Wolfe; Elementary, Clegg Furr; Youth, Mrs. Russell Pope; and Adult, John A. Crook, Jr.

The church owes a debt of gratitude to all the dedicated workers in the Church School (or Sunday School or Sabbath School), who during the past century have been an inspiration and a guide to so many people.

OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

Space does not permit the naming of all the elders, deacons and trustees who have served the church faithfully and efficiently throughout the century. Until recent years, these officers were elected for life; the office of trustee is still a permanent one.

ELDERS

The first elders were Colonel Samuel H. Walkup and Colonel W.H. Fitzgerald, who were elected on September 27, 1893. By 1902, the list included the names of Dr. W.C. Ramsey, S.R. Williamson, A.F. Stevens, R.A. Morrow, Dr. J.M. Belk, W.H. Martin, F.H. Wolfe and Walter A. Lane.

On April 20, 1969, the congregation voted to adopt the rotation system for the election of elders, and the plan was put into effect immediately. The church was without a pastor at that time, but the Reverend Robert Turner delivered the sermon on that day and conducted the congregational meeting.

Until December 28, 1969, the Session was composed of all male members; but on that date, Mrs. John W. Ormand was ordained as the first woman elder. Since that time, Mrs. R.A. Willis, Jr., Mrs. Fred McCallum and Mrs. Ned Sell have been elected to the office. The records of the Session show that there have been ninety-four people who have served as elders, some of them having been elected more than once.

At present, the Session is composed of the following people: Dean Andrews, Carl A Boggs, Jr. (Clerk of the Session), William J. Brewer, Sr., Kenneth Collins, John A. Crook, Jr., W.E. Damon, Dan S. Davis, Leslie Everett, Frank Funderburk, Clegg M. Furr, D.B. Gettys, William C. Hunley, Rowland Lomax, Fred McCallum, Harvey Morrison, Jr., Charles L. Norwood, Dr. J.W. Ormand, N.H. Preslar, Mrs. Fred McCallum, Dr. W.H. McLeod, Cecil Mitchum, Mrs. Ned Sell, Gene Stacy, Bill Walton, James H. Williams, and Mrs. R.A. Willis, Jr.

DEACONS

The first record of the election of deacons was dated 1886, and among the first to hold that office were R.O. Robinson, W.H. Belk, J.L. Hart, J.F. McIver, Walter Wallis, Walter Norwood, James Stitt, G.W. Van

Pelt, S.B. Hart and C.H. Polly. Most of these men later became elders.

The office of deacon was a permanent one until 1944, when on October 22 of that year the congregation voted to adopt the rotation system for the election of deacons. This was during the pastorate of Mr. Turner. This system prevailed until the office of deacon was dissolved on December 31, 1971, when Mr. Stowe was pastor. On September 12, 1971, the congregation had voted to adopt the unicameral form of church government. This eliminated the office of deacon but not the responsibility of the office; this was delegated to the Board of Elders.

The names of one hundred thirty-seven men are on the roll of deacons, but many of them served for several terms.

TRUSTEES

Since the office of trustee is not subject to rotation, there have been only twenty-one trustees in the history of the church. According to records in the office of the Register of Deeds, the first trustees were William H. Simpson, J.T. Shepherd and Sandy R. McLelland.

Current members of the board are R.A. Willis, Jr., Boyeson Langley, John R. Milliken, Dr. J.W. Ormand and W.T. Wall, Jr.

WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

The women's organizations have been a vital part of the program of the church almost from the beginning. During the pastorate of the Reverend R.A. Miller, 1877-1884, the Ladies' Home Mission Society was organized with Miss Sallie Simpson as president. History rates her as a woman of unusual executive ability and of great help to the minister. Later, a Foreign Missionary Society was formed. This was some time between 1888 and 1890, when the Reverend C.W. Robinson was the pastor. Miss Lou Norwood was the first president of this organization.

At first, it was chiefly the young ladies who belonged to these groups, but the membership soon encompassed almost the entire feminine membership of the church. The monthly dues were five cents, but the women knew they could do little with this amount of money. They devised a plan for raising more. At the first of the year, each member was given a small jug with a hole in the top large enough to receive a quarter and was encouraged to drop a little change into the jug whenever she could. During the Christmas Holiday, the members had a gala meeting and with much ceremony broke the jugs. When the money was counted, it amounted to over \$100; this was a large sum at the time, which was around the turn of the century.

When the new brick church was completed in 1901, the members of the Home Missionary Society shouldered a heavy responsibility, the furnishing of the new church building. Mrs. Ellen Fitzgerald donated the two beautiful crystal chandeliers, and there were reportedly other unnamed contributions. The women devised many ways of making money. Those who could sew made aprons and small garments and sold

them. A number of women had ice cream suppers, and even the children had projects. The greatest money-making venture was that of serving dinner and supper, as they called lunch and dinner in those days, to the State Democratic Convention, which met in Monroe in the summer of 1902. The women cleared about \$150 on this project. It took quite a while, a lot of hard work and wonderful cooperation, but finally they were able to pay off the debt.

In 1904, the Home Missionary Society came to be known as the Ladies' Aid Society. Then, in 1905, the Douglas Graybill Society was organized. Soon, however, in 1907, when Mr. Atkinson was pastor, all the women's organizations merged and became known as the Woman's Missionary Society. The membership was not divided into circles until some time between 1912 and 1923, when Dr. Gurney was the pastor. In 1923, the name of the society was changed again, this time to the Woman's Auxiliary.

Until 1949, the circles were distinguished by names. These were as follows: the Sarah Walkup, named for the founder of the Sunday School, Mrs. Sarah Walkup Belk Simpson; The Ellen Fitzgerald, for the donor of the chandeliers, who was also a great leader; the George Stevens, for a son of the church who served as a missionary in Japan; the Ella Gurney, for Dr. Gurney's wife because of her spirituality and her inspirational leadership; and the young ladies' circle, named the Alice Hargett in honor of their leader. By 1949, the names had little meaning for most of the membership, and the circles henceforth have been designated by numbers.

In 1948, the name of the organization was changed to Women of the Church, the present name. Every woman in the church is a member in either an active or inactive status. Although the women no longer have money-making schemes as a group, they are generous of their time, talents and money in response to the stated purpose of the organization: "The purpose of the program and organization of the women of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., is to provide opportunities for women, as individuals and in groups, to grow in the knowledge of Christ and be strengthened as members of His Body in our contemporary world in order that they may understand and fulfill the particular responsibility they have in the family, in the congregation, in the community and around the world". Mrs. Jack McGuirt is our president.

MEN OF THE CHURCH

An organization of the Men of the Church has lacked continuity, and there are very few records of their efforts to establish a permanent organization. These records do show that the Session fostered a men's club in 1923 and that it became inactive in 1929. There were forty-seven members of this club, and one of the known things they did was to entertain the women of the church at a supper. The club was revitalized in 1933 but for how many years is not known. It was organized again in 1962 but this was not permanent either. This historian remembers Mr. Bogue Segers as the president at this time but has no record of any others who held the office.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE

No record would be complete without mention of a most important group in our congregation, the young people. Almost all of the information concerning this group was gleaned from the yearly reports of the Session.

The report of April 10, 1903, showed that there was a Young People's Society at that time, with Miss Anna Blair as president. There were eleven male and twenty-eight female members, and the stated object of the society was missionary. By 1906, there were two young people's societies: the Covenanters for men, with Fred Leggett as president; and the Miriam, with Miss Louise Morrow as president. The Covenanters assumed the support of an orphan in Korea in 1910.

How long these societies were active is not known, but another organization was effected in 1922. This was known as the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, with Miss Ollie Alexander as leader and Wesley Coble as president. At about this time, two boys' societies were organized under the leadership of Mr. C.W. Walton and Mr. F.G. Henderson. Although it must be nameless, due to lack of information, an organization for girls was also organized about this time.

All these groups met on Sunday evening before the church service. Since that time, these have always been young people's societies and they have been until recent years divided into different age groups. At present, there are the Junior and Senior High Fellowships, which meet in early evening on Sunday and have a diversified program of worship, study and recreation. Students from Wingate College assist in this program and help to make the Fellowships an excellent training ground for leadership in the church and the community. The sponsors are Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Griffin and Mr. and Mrs. Gene Stacy.

THE CHOIR

Of special importance to the worship service is the ministry of music, which has always been outstanding in our church. Were such a list available, a roll call of all the men and women who have lifted their voices in anthems of praise and adoration would be a lengthy one. Much of the credit for the beautiful music must go to the organists-cum-choir directors for their dedication of time and talent in producing superior choirs. This dedication and the faithfulness of the choir members have combined to produce a ministry of music that has always been a source of inspiration and enjoyment to the congregations.

Besides the adult choirs, there have also been several youth choirs. Directed by adults, these young singers have added a special sparkle to any church service in which they participated. We are fortunate to have such a delightful group in our church at present.

Since early records are not complete, we cannot be sure who the first organist was. However, we do know that Mrs. Brevard Wolfe was organist in the first little church, around 1890, and that she received five

dollars per month. This historian recently learned that Mrs. Wolfe's sister, Miss Minnie Williamson, preceded her as organist. In 1896, Miss Elise Ramsey (Mrs. C.M. Redfern's sister) became the organist, and Mr. Walter Norwood was choir director. Miss Ramsey was followed by Miss Kate Rudge (Mrs. James T. Griffith, Sr.). About this time, the church must have been in dire financial straits, as the Session voted to discontinue paying the five dollars from church funds and to raise it by subscription from the congregation. Those who remember Mr. R.A. Morrow, Sr., will get a "kick" out of the fact that he heartily disapproved of such a move and asked to go on record as being opposed to it. Miss Etta Williamson, who later married the Reverend Kirkpatrick, was the next organist and the first to play the pipe organ.

Other known organists-cum-directors in the order of their service were Mrs. Henry Laney, Mrs. W.A. Lane, Miss Mary Deane Laney, Mrs. Roy Laney, Mrs. D.B. Gettys, Miss Thelma Haigler, Mrs. Robert M. Iceman, Mrs. John R. Milliken, Miss Janet Matelli, Miss Nancy Jordan and the present organist and director, Mrs. Ted. O. Morgan.

MINISTERIAL SONS OF THE CHURCH

The church is proud that four of her sons have entered the ministry. They are Olin Whitener deceased; William Gordon; Ray McCain and James Sell. All except Mr. Whitener went into the ministry when Dr. Whitley was pastor. The Reverend Robert M. Cochran re-entered the ministry under the pastorate of Dr. Whitley also.

MISSIONARIES

Although our church has had only one member to become a missionary, it has sponsored two Home Missions movements and helped in the support of four missionaries to foreign fields. The Reverend George Stevens, a member of our church, served as a missionary in China some years ago.

On the home front, in the early 1900's, a group of elders including Dr. J.M. Belk, Mr. W.H. Belk and Mr. R.A. Morrow had a vision of the county dotted with Presbyterian Churches. To realize their dream, they secured the services of the Reverend R.J. McIlwaine to work as an evangelist in the county toward this end. Mr. McIlwaine began this work in 1910 and, with gifts of money and materials from these three men and others, was successful in organizing sixteen Presbyterian Churches in the county.

Another Home Missions project was that of the organization by our church of a Sunday School at Benton Heights. This was in 1937, and one of our members, Mr. V.H. Wood, was the first superintendent.

In addition to monetary support for World Missions, the First Presbyterian Church has sponsored three foreign missionaries. Miss Ethel Kestler, now deceased, went to Korea in 1905 as a medical missionary. Mr. Atkinson was pastor of the church at that time and was responsible for the church's sponsorship of Miss Kestler. Although she was not a member of our church, we felt close to her as "our" missionary.

Presently, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert H. Sisk are serving in the mission field in Brazil. The church assumed one-half of their support in 1961, when Dr. Whitley was pastor, and the congregation has come to know and love them through the visits they have made to the church. In 1962, the Session voted to give partial financial support to Miss Pat Whitener, who was then a missionary in Korea. Miss Whitener had been but was not then a member of this congregation.

ADDENDA

Former Directors of Religious Education in our church are Miss Amy Pettit and Miss Beatrice Kiser. Directors of Youth Activities have been Miss Sue McLeod (Mrs. Jacobs) and Mr. William S. Cox.

In 1968, Mrs. Grace Henderson Smith, a former member of this church, set up an Educational Endowment Fund to provide scholarships for young people in the church in their pursuance of a college education. Mrs. Smith's generous endowment was accepted by the Session on October 20, 1968, and the fund was executed as of January 2, 1969. Applicants are screened and chosen by a scholarship committee from the church, the selections subject to the approval of the Session.

The church conducts a Bible School every year in June for the young people in the congregation. The first such School was begun in the 1930's and was a combined effort of all the churches in town.

The church operates a kindergarten during the school season. Directors of the kindergarten are Mrs. John R. Milliken and Mrs. William D. Benton.

Mrs. Charles Fortenberry is the church secretary and treasurer.

CONCLUSION

As we write "finis" to the hundred-year history of the First Presbyterian Church, we rejoice anew in the rich heritage that is ours as members of the church. When, on September 27 of this year, we begin making the history of the next century, let us give God the glory for the accomplishment of the past and look to Him as our guide for the future.

It is fitting that we close this history with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. It is offered by Margaret Baucom (Mrs. H. Bascom):

IN THY NAME ¶ WE SING HYMNS OF PRAISE

Eternal God and Heavenly Father, we are grateful
For our part in helping to build Thy Kingdom at
This moment and Time in the history of Thy Church.

Humbly, we acknowledge our shortcomings in
Proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ and
In meeting the special needs of our fellow man.

We thank Thee for the joy of Christian service and
The loving devotion of the Ministry of this church
During a Century of spiritual and material growth.

In Thy name, we sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving
For the gift of Thy son, Jesus Christ, and the
Divine promise of everlasting Life.

When that glorious Day of Judgement shall come,
We pray that each of us may hear the Triumphant
Words, "Well done, good and faithful servant,
Enter thou into the Kingdom of Thy God!"

By Margaret Baucom
A.D. 1973

